

COLCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Education Meeting
Colchester High School Media Center

Tuesday, January 7, 2025
7:00 p.m.

MINUTES (General Session)

The Colchester Board of Education held a regular board meeting on Tuesday, January 7, 2025, in the Colchester High School Media Center. Board members in attendance were Board Chair Lindsey Cox, Directors Nic Longo, Ben Yousey-Hindes, Laurie Kigonya, Jennifer Fath and Student Representative Rylee Friend. District administrators and employees in attendance included Superintendent Amy Minor, Business and Operations Manager George Trieb, Director of Curriculum and Instruction Gwen Carmolli, and Director of Student Support Services Carrie Lutz. There was one audience member.

I. Call to Order

Board Chair Lindsey Cox called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Citizen Participation

None.

III. Approval of Colchester School District Announced Tuition Rate

Action

Each year, districts are required by law to announce their anticipated tuition for students attending Colchester Schools from other districts that do not have a high school or middle school. Most tuition students attending CSD are from the Grand Isle Supervisory Union and the town of Georgia.

Director Longo moved to approve the announced tuition rate for FY 2026 at \$17,200 for elementary grades (k-6) and \$23,300 for secondary grades (7-12).

IV. Hear FY'26 Budget Discussion

Information

Superintendent Amy Minor provided a recap of the previous budget presentations, including stable enrollment, key term definitions used in the state's education funding formula, and how the variables impact the local estimated tax rate. She outlined top priorities for the FY'26 budget, including maintaining resources to support multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) in academics, social-emotional learning, and inclusion; adhering to Vermont Education Quality Standards for class sizes; prioritizing early literacy and mathematics proficiency; continuing co-curricular activities; protecting services for the district's most vulnerable students and families; exploring system efficiencies to ensure fiscal responsibility; and retaining current levels of professional staffing while monitoring future needs identified by school principals.

The board supported the budget priorities outlined by administrators. Based on that feedback at the previous meeting, two scenarios were considered. The first scenario rolls over the current budget with no additions or reductions, which amounts to \$65,501,603 — this budget increase of 14.06% results in an estimated tax increase of 4.37%. The second scenario has no additions but includes reductions through open positions. That scenario creates a budget of \$64,889,466, an increase of 13% and resulting in an estimated tax increase of 3.10%.

Superintendent Minor then went over the impact of the dollar yield, a component set by the state that significantly impacts the local tax rate. The two scenarios outlined used the current announced dollar

yield; however, it was noted that the state could alter that number at will. They showed what would happen if the state decided to change the dollar yield by 5% or 10%, raising the estimated tax rate by as much. They emphasized that they do not know if the state will change the yield but felt it was important for the board to know the possibility exists.

Director Kigonya highlighted that the proposed budget reduces positions rather than adding and expressed concern about the vulnerability of Colchester's estimated tax rate to state-level decisions.

Director Longo thanked administrators for identifying budget cuts and inquired about the necessary reductions to maintain a 3% tax increase if there were a 1% yield decrease.

Director Yousey-Hindes sought details on the reduction in open positions, including the decision-making process and its impact on student support. Director of Student Support Services Carrie Lutz explained the analysis of 25-28 open positions, focusing on long-standing vacancies, current coverage strategies, and a spread-out reduction approach. Superintendent Minor reassured that the service delivery model would remain intact despite reductions.

Director Fath asked if Colchester would still be among the lowest-spending districts with the proposed budget. Business and Operations Manager George Trieb indicated that the district would approach the county and state spending averages with the bond payment included.

Mr. Trieb further updated how the facilities bond will impact the FY'26 operational budget. Black River Design Architects has recommended moving the construction start date up by six months to the fall of 2025. The board discussed the recommendation and impact of accelerating the construction schedule, including cost savings amid inflation. Directors Longo and Fath supported the idea, and the board agreed. They discussed the importance of keeping the community updated on progress connected to construction.

V. Second and Final Reading of Video Surveillance Policy: F24 Action

This policy was reviewed as part of the scheduled cycle. There were no edits or changes requested.

Director Yousey-Hindes moved to approve the second and final reading of the Video Surveillance Policy: F24. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Approval of Consent Agenda Action

The board reviewed the following consent agenda.

Director Kigonya moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

- VII. Approval of Meeting Minutes** **Action**
- December 17, 2024 (special)
 - December 17, 2024 (general)

Director Kigonya moved to approve both sets of minutes from the December 17, 2024 meetings. The motion passed unanimously.

- VIII. Board/Administration Communication, Correspondence, Committee Reports** **Information**
- Facility renovations have focused on different employees from PPS and UMS meeting with Black River Design to finalize floor plans.

- IX. Future Agenda Items** **Information**
- School Reports
 - FY26 Budget Development
 - Policy Work

- X. Executive Session to Discuss Contract Negotiations** **Action**

Director Longo moved to enter executive session at 8:09 p.m. to discuss contract negotiations. The motion passed unanimously.

Director Kigonya moved to exit executive session at 9:22 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

- XI. Adjournment**

Director Fath moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:23 p.m.

Recorder:

Board Clerk:

Meghan Baule
Recording Secretary

Ben Yousey-Hindes
Board Clerk